



Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance

Testimony of Merrill Gay
Executive Director, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Before the Children's Committee
March 3, 2015

SB 956

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Merrill Gay; I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide membership organization committed to ensuring that all children in Connecticut are healthy, safe and ready for lifelong success.

The Alliance supports efforts to simplify and expand the access to the Care4Kids program. Specifically we support annual redetermination of family eligibility to reduce the administrative burdens and bring Connecticut into compliance with the recent reauthorization of the federal Childcare Development Block Grant.

The primary thrust of SB 956 is to expand Care4kids eligibility to parents enrolled in college. Childcare is a huge issue for the many parents who are working to complete a college education in order to increase their earning potential. Under the current rules income eligible parents are only eligible for childcare subsidies while they are working. Childcare while they attend classes is not covered. Expanding eligibility makes absolute sense if we want to improve the economic circumstances of children in Connecticut. Children live in the context of their families. If their parents struggle financially the children are worse off. If their parents can earn a decent wage they are more likely to thrive.

The Alliance urges you to vote this bill out of committee. We understand that it will involve a large fiscal note which in this budget climate is likely to kill it. It is important that you make the statement that we need to support families as they try to increase their earning potential. The Alliance also believes that annual redetermination is important enough on its own to go forward even if there aren't the funds to expand eligibility to new families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.